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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the human and locational factors that influence patterns of residential mobility within metropolitan areas and discusses ways that public policy influences mobility patterns. The first section focuses on current demographic trends in central cities and suburbs, discussing data from the mid 1970s on population movement between cities and suburbs, regional differences in these trends, the racial and socioeconomic characteristics of people who move, and turnover rates in metropolitan housing. The second section deals principally with the reasons that people move within the same metropolitan area, presenting data on age of movers, changes in housing tenure (i.e., from rental to home ownership), and behavior involved in seeking a new home. The third section of the paper considers ways that Federal policy can facilitate the redistribution of populations in order to attract higher income households to the cities and reduce the disproportionate concentration of the poor in these areas. (GC)

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URBAN RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY: PLACES, PEOPLE, AND POLICY

JOHN L. GOODMAN, JR.



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FOREWORD

It was not the deliberate intent of U.S. housing policy to siphon the middle classes, together with their portable tax potentials, off to the suburbs and to bequeath to many of the older central cities a deepened concentration of poverty. Somewhere along the line, what had been envisaged as a fundamental good had become tainted by inadvertent and unpredicted consequences. These consequences might have been avoided or managed more easily if there had been a fuller understanding of how people behave in housing markets and how their preferences, constraints, and capabilities interact with place to determine the nature of the neighborhoods and communities they live in.

This second title in the Institute's Perspectives on Housing series examines the human and locational factors that influence the patterns of residential mobility in metropolitan areas, since that is where the majority of residential moves are made and that is also the arena where the cities and suburbs compete for population. Some of the findings are of special interest. Contrary to general opinion, for example, only one move in 20 is motivated by neighborhood considerations such as schools, race, or crime, while most moves are related to dwelling needs or changes in marital status. The patterns of residential moves are also much tighter than one might expect: of all residential moves, four out of five are either within the central city, or within the suburbs, and over a third do not go out of the neighborhood. Even the search for a new residence does not generally stray far from the old one.

In reaction to the continuing evolution of America's urban areas, the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 listed the following aims: (1) to reduce "the isolation of income groups within communities and geographic areas," (2) to promote "an increase in the diversity and vitality of neighborhoods through the spatial deconcentration of housing opportunities for persons of lower income," and (3) to revitalize "deteriorating or deteriorated neighborhoods to attract persons of higher income." As this study points out, the Act appears to urge that suburban housing opportunities be provided for the central city poor and that measures be taken to induce the movement of the middle classes to the central city. It is not an easy prescription to follow, and different problems are faced in facilitating the outward movement of the poor and the middle class movement into the city. Actions to promote population redistribution in urban areas require delicate balancing and are likely to lead to conflict between policies to help people and those to help places. This study addresses these issues and offers a perspective on possible answers.

William Gorham, *President*
The Urban Institute

Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

By moving from place to place within a metropolitan area, households change not only their housing, but also the nature of neighborhoods. For the movers, the results of the relocation may be homeownership, a better location, or some other housing adjustment. Although the effects on places are more subtle, the impact of residential mobility on the size and composition of a neighborhood's or community's population is a prime determinant of an area's economic and social well-being.

Residential mobility is, then, a key ingredient of change for places as well as for people. As such, mobility becomes important to public policy, since attainment of a decent home for all Americans and the preservation and revitalization of the nation's cities are expressed national goals and the objectives of many federal, state, and local programs. To pursue these national objectives effectively, policymakers must understand urban residential mobility and how public policy is influencing or could influence mobility patterns.

This paper emphasizes moves occurring within metropolitan areas, rather than moves between regions or between urban and rural areas. The causes of local moves and long-distance moves are somewhat different, as are their consequences and policy linkages.

Note: The author is grateful to Morton Isler and John C. Weicher for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

URBAN RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY: PLACES

Moves between Cities and Suburbs

Well-publicized statistics on population change in metropolitan areas document the trend in the 1970s toward depopulation of some of the largest and oldest metropolitan areas. Ten of the nation's twenty-five largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas¹ (SMSAs) and nearly one out of every six SMSAs nationwide lost population in the first half of the 1970s. The populations of many other metropolitan areas have either remained stationary or increased only minimally.

In an era of reduced metropolitan population growth, competition between cities and suburbs for residents has become a higher-stakes game, since it can no longer be expected that city dwellers who move to the suburbs will be replaced by immigrants from nonmetropolitan areas or from abroad. It is a game the central cities have been losing (table 1). Central cities as a group had 2.1 million fewer residents in 1976 than

Table 1
METROPOLITAN POPULATION GROWTH

Residence	Average Annual Percentage Change In Population	
	1970 to 1976	1960 to 1970
Metropolitan areas	.7	1.5
In central cities	-.6	.6
Outside central cities	1.6	2.4

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Population Profile of the United States: 1976*, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, no. 307 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

¹. Except in New England, an SMSA is a county or group of contiguous counties which contains at least one "central city" of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or "central cities" with a combined population of at least 50,000. In addition to the county, or counties, containing such a city or cities, contiguous counties are included in an SMSA if, according to certain criteria, they are essentially metropolitan in character and are socially and economically integrated with the central county. In New England, SMSAs consist of towns and cities, rather than counties. Unless otherwise noted, the metropolitan population in this paper is based on SMSAs as defined in the 1970 census and does not include any subsequent additions or changes. "Suburbs" refers to the portion of the SMSA outside the central city or cities.

in 1970. In some instances, the decline in central-city populations has been substantial. The population of the city of St. Louis, for example, dropped by 10 percent during just the first three years of the seventies.

Net movement out of central cities is responsible for the decline in urban population observed during the seventies. Seven million more people moved out of central cities in the first half of the decade than moved in, and this loss was not completely offset by natural population increase. At middecade, nearly two-thirds of central-city population loss resulted from moves to the suburban ring of the same metropolitan area (table 2). Thus, most population loss by central cities is not part of some regional shift or movement out of metropolitan areas. Rather, it stems from city residents' choosing to move to the suburbs and from suburbanites' choosing *not* to move to the city.

Table 2
MOVERS INTO AND OUT OF CENTRAL CITIES: 1975-76
(Thousands)

All movers out of central cities	4,605		
All movers into central cities	<u>2,650</u>		
Total net outflow from central cities		1,955	
Components			
Movers out to suburbs of same SMSA	2,419		
Movers in from suburbs of same SMSA	<u>1,162</u>		
Net outflow from central cities as percentage of total net outflow		1,257	64%
Movers out to suburbs of different SMSA	1,080		
Movers in from suburbs of different SMSA	<u>660</u>		
Net outflow from central cities as percentage of total net outflow		420	22%
Movers out to nonmetropolitan areas	1,106		
Movers in from nonmetropolitan areas	<u>828</u>		
Net outflow from central cities as percentage of total net outflow		278	14%
Total net outflow from central cities		<u>1,955</u>	100%

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, no. 305 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977).

NOTE: During this period, 992,000 individuals moved from the central city of one SMSA to the central city of another. Table also excludes migrants to and from abroad.

Table 3
**COMPONENTS OF CENTRAL-CITY POPULATION
 LOSS THROUGH MOVES, BY REGION: 1975-76**
 (Percentage Distribution)

Component	Northeast	Northcentral	South	West
Net moves out to suburbs of same SMSA	35	72	74	114
Net movement to suburbs of other SMSAs in region	24	2	7	12
Net moves out to nonmetropolitan areas in region	3	16	25	-5
Net movement out of region	38	10	-6	-21
Total	100	100	100	100
Total net move- ment out as percentage of city population	1.8	2.9	3.3	3.2

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*.

Cities in all four regions of the country are losing more people through moves than they are gaining (table 3). In the Northeast, where many of the declining cities are located, more of the city population loss was attributable to moves out of the region than in other areas of the nation; but even there, nearly 60 percent of the loss resulted from moves to suburbs within the same region. Surprisingly, the cities of the South, West, and Northcentral regions are losing people through moves at a faster rate than are the cities of the Northeast. In the West, city population increase through net movement into the region and from western nonmetropolitan areas only partially offsets the larger net outflow of city dwellers to the suburbs. The rate of net movement out of the cities at mid-decade increased over the rate for the first half of the decade, from an annual average of 2.5 percent out-movement during 1970-75 to 3.3 percent in 1975-76.

All segments of the population contributed to the movement out of the cities at middecade, although at different rates (table 4). Whites

Table 4
RATE OF MOVEMENT OUT OF CENTRAL CITIES: 1975-76

Population Group	Gross Departure Rate ^{a, d}	Net Departure Rate ^{b, d}
All central city residents	7.7	3.3
Age:		
1-19	9.4	3.7
20-34	21.2	8.5
35-64	5.2	2.8
65+	2.3	1.1
Ethnicity: white	9.0	3.9
black	3.4	1.3
Spanish/American	6.0	3.0
Presence of children, for family heads under 55 years of age:		
Family heads without children	9.5	4.9
Family heads with children	7.0	3.7
Receipt of public assistance in past year:		
Family heads receiving public assistance	5.5	1.4
Family heads not receiving public assistance	7.7	3.9
Annual income for males age 16+ ^c :		
\$0-10,000	6.5	3.2
10,000-24,999	6.7	3.5
25,000+	5.6	2.0
Education, for population 18 and older ^c :		
High school or less	5.1	2.7
More than high school	8.2	3.4

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*.

- a. "Gross departure rate" is defined as movers out of central cities during the 12 months preceding March 1976 as a percentage of the population of that type in central cities in March 1976.
- b. "Net departure rate" is defined as movers out of central cities minus movers into central cities during the 12 months preceding March 1976 as a percentage of the population in central cities in March 1976.
- c. Figures are exclusive of moves between central cities and nonmetropolitan areas.
- d. All rates are exclusive of moves to and from abroad.

are moving out at a net rate three times greater than blacks, and young adults are moving out at a faster rate than any other age group, thus leaving the cities' population older and blacker. On the other hand, moves may not, at the present time, be leaving the cities with markedly

poorer populations. For example, the net departure rate for adult males is lowest for those with the highest income. Adults with the most education do leave the city at an above-average rate, but the differential is not large. Perhaps most surprisingly, national figures do not support the common perception that families with children are especially likely to move away from cities.

Population loss has ominous implications for the economic and social well-being of cities. Fewer people remain to support the city's tax base, but the city's ability to cut back on public expenditures is typically limited. The figures in table 4 imply that, at the present time, the increasing poverty of the cities is due more to the number of people leaving the city than to their income levels and earnings potential.

From a social perspective, white flight from cities to suburbs leads to a dangerous racial polarization which magnifies traditional rivalries and disputes between city and suburban communities. One of the hallmarks of urban development over the past 30 years has been white flight from central cities to suburbs. It is difficult to determine how much of the white flight is racially motivated and how much is due to expanding housing and employment opportunities in the suburbs. An argument can be made that the combination of housing-market conditions, black rural-to-urban migration, and racial attitudes that promoted the white movement to the suburbs during the 1950s no longer exists, and that "the current white flight is largely a response to deteriorating economic and environmental conditions within central cities" [7]. Whatever the current cause, the net movement of whites out of central cities is clearly continuing.

Back to the City?

More than twice as many people are moving out of central cities to their suburbs than are moving in. Nonetheless, the counterflow from suburb to city is substantial, with over a million people making this move in 1976 alone. The "back-to-the-city" movement has raised both hopes and fears in the last few years. Some see this trend as a real boon to central cities, stemming the tide of population decline, racial segregation, and a shrinking city tax base. Others view the back-to-the-city movement as a threat to the city's poor and minorities, who are in danger of being displaced by the influx of suburbanites.

The debate over the back-to-the-city movement is hampered by a number of popular misconceptions. The first misconception is that the movement is a recent development. While it is true that the *number* of suburb-to-central-city movers has increased somewhat over the past 20 years, the increase has occurred because of the growing number of

Table 5
SUBURB-TO-CITY MOVES: 1955-60, 1965-70, 1970-75
 (Thousands)

Time Period	Areas Included	Movers from Suburbs to Central City of Same Metropolitan Area	Suburban Population over Age 5 at End of Period	Movers/Population
1955-60	SMSAs with population 250,000+	1,216	42,394	.029
1965-70	SMSAs with population 250,000+	1,827	62,193	.029
1965-70	All SMSAs	2,104	69,116	.030
1970-75	All SMSAs	2,123	75,257	.028

SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Mobility for Metropolitan Areas*, U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-2C (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Mobility for Metropolitan Areas*, U.S. Census of Population: 1970, Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-2C (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Mobility of the Population of the United States: March 1970 to March 1975*, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, no. 285 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975).

NOTES: Due to changes in SMSA definitions between 1960 and 1970, areas included in figures for 1955-60 are not identical to those for large SMSAs, 1965-70. Figures for all SMSAs 1965-70 and 1970-75 are based on 1970 SMSA definitions and are comparable. Movers are defined as residents of suburbs at beginning of period who moved and resided in central city of same metropolitan area at end of period. Since suburban population over age 5 at end of period is only an approximation of the population "at risk" of moving to the central city during the period, movers/population should not be interpreted as a mobility rate. It illustrates only the relative magnitudes of the two groups.

suburbanites and not because any given suburbanite is more likely now than before to move to the city (table 5).

The second misconception is that the white, childless professional is the backbone of the back-to-the-city movement. Most of the movers from the suburbs to the cities are neither childless nor professional (table 6). Because of the small number of black suburbanites, most movers into the city are in fact white, but the rate at which black suburbanites moved into the city in 1975 was twice that of whites. Except for race and average age, the back-to-the-city movers are quite

Table 6
**CHARACTERISTICS OF CENTRAL-CITY POPULATION
 AND OF MOVERS FROM SUBURBS TO CENTRAL CITY
 OF SAME SMSA: 1975-76**

	Suburb-to- Central-City Movers	Entire Central-City Population
Percentage black	10	23
Percentage of family heads (under age 55) with children	65	70
Percentage of workers professional or technical	19	16
Percentage under age 35	79	57
Median years of school completed by population age 18 and over	12.8	12.4
Unemployment rate (population over age 16)	12	9
Percentage of family heads receiving AFDC or general state and local welfare payments	13	10

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*.

similar to those already in the city. Contrary to popular opinion, suburb-to-city moves do not substantially raise the average socioeconomic status of city populations. The percentage of male workers who are professionals and the average level of schooling are only marginally higher among suburb-to-city movers than among other city residents. In fact, these movers often place additional burdens on cities, since they are more likely to be unemployed and recipients of AFDC or other general public assistance than are people already in the central cities.

A third misconception is that the purchase and revitalization of older central-city homes that has been observed in the 1970s is largely attributable to refugees from the suburbs. On the contrary, 70 percent of households that purchased homes in the central cities in 1973 and 1974 were moving from another place in the central city. Only 11 percent of the central-city buyers were moving in from the suburbs [13].

To put this discussion of city/suburb population exchanges into

perspective, it should be noted that most moves occur within the central city or within the suburbs. Only one metropolitan mover out of five crosses the central-city boundary. This indicates the tendency for moves to be of short distance, since if all dwellings in the metropolitan area had an equal chance of selection by all movers, half of the metropolitan movers nationwide would be expected to cross the boundary.

Summary statistics on metropolitan residential mobility nationwide mask substantial differences in mobility patterns across areas. The mobility rate itself exemplifies these differences. To cite two extremes, 30 percent of the households in the Dallas, Texas, metropolitan area moved in 1973, whereas only 15 percent of the households in the Albany, New York, SMSA moved that year. In general, growing metropolitan areas have more mobile populations than do stagnant or declining areas. This is partially a matter of definition, since growing metropolitan areas tend to grow because of in-migration. However, those in-migrants continue to move, within the area, at rates higher than those of otherwise comparable households in other metropolitan areas [10].

The locations favored by movers vary across SMSAs as well, and movement from city to suburb is not always the dominant flow. For example, in the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area in 1974, as many households moved from the suburbs to the city of Phoenix as moved out from the city to the suburbs. In contrast, during the same period, four households moved from the city to the suburbs of Newark, New Jersey, for every one moving in.

Residential Mobility and the Housing Stock

The mobility behavior of a metropolitan area's population affects local housing-market conditions and in turn is affected by those conditions. One linkage is through "filtering," the process by which middle- and lower-income families improve their housing by moving to residences vacated by higher-income households who move into newly constructed units. There is some disagreement on whether low-income households actually benefit (in the sense of receiving more housing per dollar spent) in the long run from the filtering process or if it is just a short-run benefit that disappears as the market adjusts to the lower purchasing power of the unit's new occupants by reducing the quality of service provided by each unit [16].

Whether or not long-run housing improvement results from the filtering process, it is clear that moves by different households are interdependent links in a chain. A move by one household creates a vacancy which another household fills, and so on. A national study in the mid-sixties traced back from recent movers into new houses and apart-

Table 7
**METROPOLITAN HOUSING TURNOVER RATES,
 BY UNIT CHARACTERISTICS**

Unit Characteristic	Turnover Rate (%)
<i>Tenure</i>	
Owner-occupied units	9
Renter-occupied units	36
<i>Year structure built</i>	
1972-73	69
1970-71	23
1960-64	18
1950s	13
1940s	14
Before 1940	16
<i>Number of rooms</i>	
1-2	36
3-4	30
5-6	14
7-10	11
11+	14
<i>Value (owner-occupied units only)</i>	
\$ 1-14,999	5
15,000-24,999	8
25,000-39,999	10
40,000+	11
<i>Monthly rent + utilities (renter-occupied units only)</i>	
\$ 1-99	25
100-199	38
200-299	41
300+	39

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1973 National Annual Housing Survey, public use files.

NOTE: "Turnover rate" is defined as the percentage of occupied units into which a household head moved in the preceding 12 months (an approximation of the percentage of units that came onto the market and were bought or rented during the past year). The high turnover rate for newly constructed units reflects moves-in by the initial residents.

ments [14]. It was found that three and one-half moves were induced by each move into a newly constructed unit and that moves in each stage of the chain were typically to more expensive housing. Newly constructed units were generally occupied by higher-income households. But for every 1,000 new units constructed, 333 low-income households eventually moved as part of the chain reaction, usually to more expensive housing.

Newly constructed housing is a relatively minor component of the supply of options available to prospective movers, as implied by the numbers above. Statistics on metropolitan housing nationwide show that only 27 percent of the units into which households moved in 1974 were less than four years old. Of course, new construction is more important in growing areas. For example, in Orlando, Florida, fully 48 percent of the dwelling units into which households moved in 1974 were built during the preceding four years.

Metropolitan areas with high mobility rates generally offer more housing options to prospective movers, since more of their dwelling units become available during any specified time period. The broader range of options may allow movers to obtain a better approximation of the specific combination of dwelling unit, neighborhood, and location features they seek. But high turnover rates do not assure high vacancy rates and an easy housing search. High-mobility areas are often also rapid-growth areas with tight housing markets. Units may change occupants frequently yet be vacant for only a short period, with the result that the options available to the searcher on any given day are limited and the competition for vacancies is severe.

Different types of housing units within metropolitan areas turn over at varying rates—a manifestation of the different mobility propensities of the people who tend to occupy them. Metropolitan rental units are four times as likely as owner-occupied units to change occupants over a 12-month period (table 7). Old dwelling units, often inhabited by low-mobility older people, turn over less often than newer units. Large units turn over less frequently than small, predominantly rental, units, and, in general, the more expensive a house or apartment the more recently it has been on the market.

URBAN RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY: PEOPLE

Who Moves?

By international standards, the U.S. population is rather footloose. Current figures indicate that each American can expect to move during 13 different years of his life. In ten of those years, the move will be local [15]. Of the metropolitan population, about 18 percent move in a year, and two-thirds of the moves are to another place in the same metropolitan area.

The moves that occur in metropolitan areas are not evenly distributed across the population. Some individuals are more likely to move than others. Specifically, two overlapping groups are responsible for most of the moves—young people and renters.

Moving is a behavior of the young. Half of the moves an individual undertakes in his lifetime occur during the first third of his life, by age 26. Persons under age 35 are almost three times as likely to move in a given year as are those over 35. This age pattern characterizes long-distance, as well as local, movers (figure 1).

The decision-making unit for a move can be an entire household or an individual. (Sometimes an individual is a household.) Children's mobility decisions are made by their parents. Young children, whose parents are typically in their twenties and thirties, have higher mobility rates than do older children, whose parents also tend to be older and less prone to move.

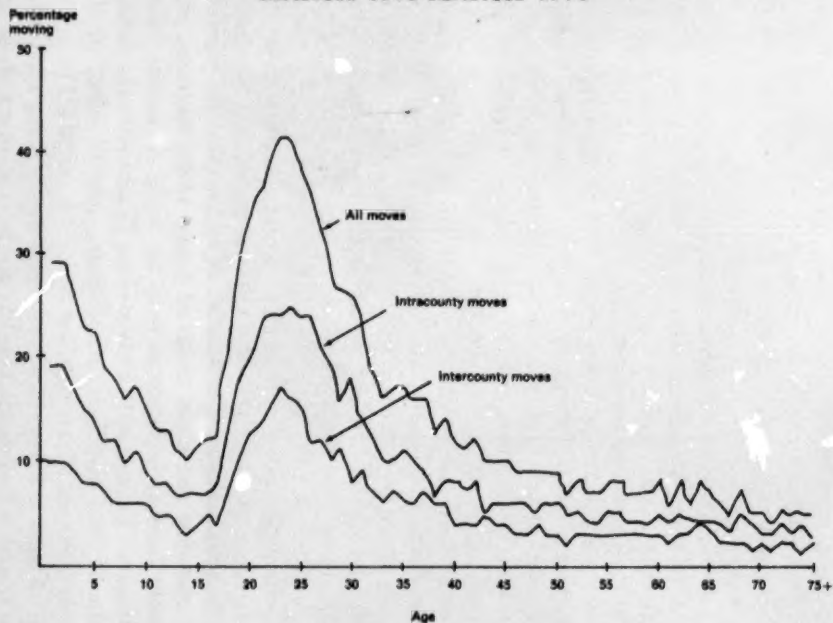
Young adults move more often than older people because they have more reason to move. Indeed, the beginning of an individual's young adulthood is usually marked by his departure from his parents' home. The economic and social status of young adults fluctuates often, and frequent housing adjustments must be made to accommodate these fluctuations. Income and family size are likely to change during young adulthood, and marriages and divorces, most of which involve individuals under age 35, are common during this period [21].

In addition to having more reasons to move, young adults often have little reason not to move. They do not have to worry about uprooting their children from their school and friends, and they usually lack the strong psychological attachment to a home or neighborhood that deters some older people from moving.

Sixty-one percent of U.S. metropolitan households own the housing they occupy. But the bulk (75 percent) of the moves that take place within metropolitan areas are by renters. Renters are about four times as likely to move in any year as owners are. Renters are not deterred

Figure 1

PROBABILITIES OF INTRACOUNTY AND INTERCOUNTY MOVES, BY AGE:
MARCH 1975-MARCH 1976



SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Geographic Mobility: March 1975 to March 1976*.

from moving by the sizable transaction costs that owners face, which can easily amount to 10 percent of the sales price. And renters are disproportionately younger adults who, as noted above, have high mobility propensities.

While an almost identical percentage of blacks and whites move each year, whites are more likely than blacks to migrate from one area to another, whereas blacks are somewhat more likely to move *within* metropolitan areas. Seventeen percent of blacks who remained within a metropolitan area moved in 1975, compared to 12 percent of whites. The higher local mobility rate of blacks is attributable to their below-average rate of homeownership [8].

High-income households have below-average propensities to move within metropolitan areas, largely because of their high rate of homeownership and their older household heads. In 1975, 20 percent of the heads of metropolitan husband-wife families with yearly incomes below \$10,000 moved within the area, whereas only 8 percent of the heads of families with yearly incomes above \$25,000 did so. Twenty-one percent of the metropolitan population with incomes below the poverty line moved locally, compared to only 11 percent of the rest of the metropolitan population.

In trying to predict who will move next year, a good bet is to select those who move this year. The moves that take place in metropolitan areas tend to occur within a limited segment of the population that moves repeatedly, while another segment moves rarely if at all. Young adults in particular often go through a period of apartment-hopping prior to marriage and the mobility-inhibiting milestones of parenthood and home purchase.

Why Do People Move?

Schools, race, and crime often receive top billing as the reasons for moves in urban areas. Yet according to the movers themselves, these neighborhood factors were the main reason for no more than one move out of twenty in metropolitan areas (table 8). Far more important were the characteristics of the dwelling itself and changes in marital status.

In general, moves within metropolitan areas are housing-related, whereas long-distance moves more often are motivated by employment considerations. The two main categories of housing-related moves are voluntary housing adjustments and by-product moves.

Voluntary housing adjustments account for over half of all moves within metropolitan areas. More space, a "better" place, and home purchase are the most common reasons. By-product moves occur as the result of some other decision—to marry, to divorce, to leave the parents'

Table 8
REASONS FOR MOVES WITHIN METROPOLITAN AREAS: 1973
 (Percentage Distribution)

Movers within Metropolitan Areas										
Primary Reason	Family Type						Race		Previous Housing Tenure	
	All Households	Nonelderly One-Person Households	Nonelderly Couples, No Children	Nonelderly Couples with Children	Single-Parent Households	Elderly Households	Black	White	Own	Rent
Family size change, need more space	15	6	10	25	18	3	19	14	21	17
Change in marital status (marriage, divorce, separation, death of spouse)	12	12	28	4	12	9	8	12	15	4
Better house, more conveniences	12	10	9	12	14	17	14	11	13	15
Homeownership	11	5	14	18	4	2	9	11	2	16
Establishment of own household	9	18	5	5	11	6	12	9	2	3
Lower rent, less expensive house	7	9	5	5	8	9	7	7	5	8
Neighborhood	5	4	3	6	5	9	6	5	7	6

Displacement by public or private act	5	3	4	5	8	14	7	5	2	7
Commuting reasons	4	6	3	3	4	0	1	4	3	4
Other reasons	20	27	19	17	16	31	17	22	30	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1973 National Annual Housing Survey, public use files.

NOTES: Sample consists of all households in which head moved during the year preceding the interview date. "Other reasons" includes job transfer, military service, retirement, new job, other employment reasons, to go to school, to get closer to relatives, other family reasons, school quality, wanted to rent, natural disaster, change of climate, and unspecified other reasons. No one of these specific reasons accounted for more than 3 percent of the moves of any family type, with the exceptions that 4 percent of elderly movers wanted to move closer to relatives and 5 percent cited other family reasons. The listed family-type categories account for 89 percent of all mover households. Because of data limitations, statistics by premove tenure exclude the 24 percent of all moves that involved a change in household head.

home. In the case of eviction, the decision is made for the mover. Together, these by-product moves account for over a quarter of all moves within metropolitan areas.

Not all family types move for the same reason. For example, 25 percent of the local moves by couples with children are motivated by space requirements, compared to 15 percent for all households. The elderly are not very mobile, and their moves are three times as likely to be involuntary as those of nonelderly movers.

Regardless of the type of housing they occupy, movers cite surprisingly similar reasons for moving. Blacks, most of whom reside in the central city and whose housing is, on average, inferior to that of whites, nonetheless report the same reasons for their moves that whites do. The only difference of any magnitude is that a higher proportion of moves by blacks are for more space—19 percent compared to 13 percent for moves by whites.

Owners (mostly of single-family detached houses) and renters (mostly of apartments) also give broadly similar reasons for their moves, with two exceptions. First, a greater proportion of homeowners' moves are by-product moves associated with a change in marital status—separation and divorce, in particular. Second, moving to become a homeowner is an important reason only for premove renters, as would be expected.

Some moves undoubtedly are responses to school conditions and changing neighborhood racial composition, and these moves are important indicators of areas in trouble. Yet it should not be surprising that these considerations account for a tiny proportion of all moves. Many metropolitan households have no school-age children, and many parents of school-age children are either satisfied with their schools or see no better options. And, given the present level of residential segregation in U.S. metropolitan areas, relatively few households have any neighbors of a different color from whom they could be fleeing. Even in those neighborhoods that are racially changing, evidence is mixed on whether whites accelerate their out-mobility or if the transition comes about exclusively through a failure of whites to move in as vacancies occur [17, 22].

Perceptions of the level of crime in the local area have been found to have only a slight effect on moves out of the neighborhood [3], and movement by city dwellers to the suburbs is not very sensitive to city crime rates [12]. Nor are commuting burdens a major cause of moves. Although relatively few moves occur because of crime rates or commuting distances, crime and transportation ranked first and third respectively in a 1975 Gallup Poll that asked city dwellers what they regarded as their community's worst problem. But few people move for these reasons, either because they are unable to find a place that is safe

or near their workplace or, more likely, because they are unwilling to give up another desirable feature of their housing in exchange for a safer neighborhood or a place near work.

Housing Search

Since movers select their new house or apartment from among those they know to be available, the way they conduct their housing search has a strong bearing on the type, location, and price of the new dwelling unit they eventually choose. Considering the importance and expense of housing for the average family, it is surprising how little shopping goes on before a dwelling unit is selected. To illustrate, a recent survey in two medium-sized metropolitan areas revealed that roughly 30 percent of the movers looked at only the place they eventually moved to (table 9). Less than a third looked at more than five places. Studies in other housing markets corroborate this basic finding of limited searching.

Table 9 also shows that home buyers look at more places than do renters, reflecting the greater financial commitment associated with purchasing a home. Purchasers of new homes in particular shop around before deciding on a place, especially if they are in the market for an expensive home.

A wide variety of information sources are utilized during the search—newspapers, friends, "for sale" signs, and real estate agents (table 10). Many searchers use more than one of these sources, although their effectiveness in locating the unit ultimately selected varies widely. Market information sources such as newspapers and real estate agencies specialize in serving the higher-income and homeowner markets. Lower-income households and renters find personal contacts to be more effective.

Housing searches are generally conducted within very limited geographic areas. Searchers are more likely to become aware of available dwelling units near their current residence than they are of otherwise comparable units farther away, especially if they rely on nonmarket information sources (see [11] for references). This localized knowledge enhances the likelihood that movers will select units near their current residence.

Housing searches are sometimes unsuccessful. Some households that plan to move remain where they are. Of families stating in 1970 that they planned to move for housing-related reasons in the next couple of years, only 39 percent actually moved [4]. Renters, families headed by a young person, and families living in crowded dwellings are the most likely to fulfill their mobility expectations.

Table 9
**NUMBER OF PLACES LOOKED AT DURING
 HOUSING SEARCH**
 (Percentage Distributions)

Number of Dwelling Units Visited	South Bend and Surrounding St. Joseph County, Indiana		Phoenix and Surrounding Maricopa County, Arizona
	Home Buyers	Renters	Low-Income Renters
1	25	30	45
2-3	8	27	13
4-5	28	19	12
6-10	13	14	
11-15	17	6	30
16+	9	4	
Total	100	100	100

Buyers of New Homes Nationwide

Number of Subdivision Sites Visited	Purchase Price			
	All Buyers	Less than \$30,000	\$50,000- \$59,999	\$70,000 and over
1-2	12	28	7	5
3-4	21	25	20	18
5-6	26	19	26	29
7-10	24	15	27	23
11+	17	13	20	25
Total	100	100	100	100

SOURCES: Phoenix—Abt Associates, *Working Paper on Early Findings: Housing Allowance Demand Experiment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975); South Bend—The Rand Corporation, *Housing Assistance Supply Experiment*, unpublished calculations (courtesy of K. McCarthy); new homes nationwide—Michael Sumichrast et al., *Profile of a New Home Buyer* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Home Builders, 1977). Data pertain to early and mid-1970s.

Table 10
INFORMATION SOURCES DURING HOUSING SEARCH
(Percentage Distribution)

Information Source	South Bend and Surrounding St. Joseph County, Indiana				Phoenix and Surrounding Maricopa County, Arizona
	Home Buyers		Renters		Low-Income Renters
	Percentage Using Source*	Percentage Finding Place through Source	Percentage Using Source*	Percentage Finding Place through Source	Percentage Using as Primary Source of Information
Newspaper ads	67	7	77	29	21
Realtors, rental agents	71	33	28	1	3
Vacancy signs, billboards	70	15	44	6	23
Friends and relatives	58	32	75	39	42
Other	—	13	—	25	11
Total		100		100	100

How Buyers First Learned about Place	Buyers of New Homes Nationwide			
	All Buyers	Purchase Price		
		Less than \$30,000	\$50,000- \$59,999	\$70,000 and over
Newspaper ads	16	22	9	10
Realtors	21	16	24	32
Vacancy signs, billboards	35	33	41	40
Friends and relatives	22	25	20	15
Other	6	4	6	3
Total	100	100	100	100

SOURCES: Abt Associates, *Working Paper on Early Findings*; Rand Corporation, Housing Assistance Supply Experiment, unpublished tabulations; Sumichrast et al., *Profile of a New Home Buyer*.

a. More than one source could be reported.

Housing Selection of Movers

A move generally involves a substantial housing adjustment. Moving to make a minor housing change is impractical, given the costs of moving. Over two-thirds of all metropolitan homeowners who moved in 1973 paid a price for the home they bought that differed by more than \$5,000 from the sales price of their old home. Sixty percent of movers from one rental unit to another changed their housing expenditures by more than 20 percent.

The large changes in housing observed among individual movers are masked by comparisons of average premove and postmove housing, since consumption increases and consumption decreases tend to cancel each other out in summary statistics (table 11). Still, the typical move is to a place that is slightly bigger, slightly more expensive, and slightly farther from the place of work. For most families, a local move results in an improvement in their housing conditions. Downgrading moves are the exception. Families "underconsuming" housing relative to their income are more likely to move than are families "overconsuming." A

Table 11

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS OF INTRAMETROPOLITAN MOVERS BEFORE AND AFTER MOVING

	Before	After
Estimated house value (median)	\$24,372	\$25,483
Monthly gross rental expenditures (median)	\$ 148	\$ 151
Average number of rooms (mean)	4.6	4.7
Average persons per room (mean)	.7	.6
Average distance from home to work (employed household heads) (mean)	8.4 miles	10.2 miles

SOURCES: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1973 Annual Housing Survey, public use files; University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, Survey Research Center, *Panel Study of Income Dynamics* (Ann Arbor, 1974) (distance-to-work figures only).

NOTES: All figures are for movers with same head in previous and current unit. Commuting figures are for metropolitan households that moved intracounty, 1972-73. House value and rent statistics are for movers who did not change housing tenure. Rooms are exclusive of bathrooms.

"ratchet effect" is observed—families are quick to adjust their housing consumption upward but hesitant to cut back [9]. Although the magnitudes of housing-consumption increases vary among different racial and economic groups, this general tendency for moves to less crowded, more expensive housing farther from the work place holds for blacks and whites, for the rich and for the poor [8].

There are, of course, counterexamples. Children leaving their parents' home will probably move to smaller, less expensive housing, as might some elderly movers. And, counter to the major flow, some local moves are primarily motivated by a desire to decrease commuting burdens.

Even if only one factor has precipitated a move, movers use the opportunity to adjust their housing in a number of ways, and these adjustments involve tradeoffs. Commuting distance is an example. Although very few people enjoy commuting, land and, consequently, housing are more expensive close to employment centers than in outlying areas. Thus, someone spending a lot on housing saves more by living in an outlying area than does someone spending relatively little on housing. This has, in fact, been proposed as an explanation for the tendency of higher-income households to reside in the suburbs. Therefore, it is not surprising that a mover who wants to increase his housing consumption

Table 12
HOMEOWNERSHIP, BEFORE AND AFTER MOVING
(Percentage Distributions)

Movers Group	Tenure Before/Tenure After				All Combina- tions
	Rent/Rent	Own/Own	Rent/Own	Own/Rent	
All intrametropolitan movers	51	16	13	20	100
Young married movers (32 percent of all movers)	48	19	27	6	100
Elderly movers (4 percent of all movers)	46	18	8	28	100
New household formation movers (20 percent of all movers)	20	15	2	63	100

SOURCE: University of Michigan, *Panel Study of Income Dynamics*.

NOTES: Sample represents U.S. households in metropolitan areas that moved intracounty, 1972-73. Young marrieds are couples, head under age 45, with or without children; elderly households have head age 65+; new household formation moves are mostly those of children leaving parents' home and of divorced marriage partners.

would move to a place farther from high-priced employment centers and, therefore, probably farther from his place of work. The mover attempts to minimize location costs, which are jointly determined by commuting costs *and* housing prices.

One out of every three moves in urban areas involves a change in housing tenure (table 12). Most of the changes from renting to owning are by young married households, while most of the own-to-rent moves occur among the elderly or as part of a new household formation. Income, life-cycle stage, premove housing tenure, and local housing-stock composition all influence whether movers buy or rent [19].

Moves in metropolitan areas typically do not criss-cross the metropolis. As mentioned in the previous section, only one move in five crosses the city line. Because of the better knowledge of nearby options and a common preference not to leave the current neighborhood, a disproportionate share of all moves are from one house or apartment to another in the same neighborhood. A survey of 1,500 households from 43 metropolitan areas in the mid-1960s showed that one-third of all intrametropolitan moves were from one dwelling unit to another in the same neighborhood [2]. Over two-thirds of the moves were less than five miles in distance. Among low-income households, nonwhites, central-city residents, and the elderly, the average distance of move was found to be even less than for the sample overall. Another survey revealed that fewer suburban than central-city residents moved from a dwelling unit in the same neighborhood. Between a third and a half of the intra-SMSA movers surveyed stayed in their original neighborhood [23].

URBAN RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY: POLICY

The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 called for:

the reduction of the isolation of income groups within communities and geographical areas and the promotion of an increase in the diversity and vitality of neighborhoods through the spatial deconcentration of housing opportunities for persons of lower income and the revitalization of deteriorating or deteriorated neighborhoods to attract persons of higher income.

Since the urban poor are found disproportionately in the central cities, deconcentration means encouraging moves to the suburbs. Since deteriorated neighborhoods are found mostly in cities and higher-income households are found disproportionately in the suburbs, a movement of higher-income households from suburbs to cities is implied as well.

How can public policy facilitate this population redistribution? An important lesson to be drawn from research on residential mobility is that *public policy can more easily affect the destination choice of movers than the decision to move*. The data show that the decision to move is generally independent of moderate changes in households' financial conditions and housing-market conditions, precisely the changes public programs conceivably could generate. On the other hand, the housing choice of movers may be more sensitive to factors that public policy can alter. Consequently, public programs should concentrate on steering moves, instead of attempting to cause them.

Facilitating the Suburbanization of the Poor

The urban poor will be able to move to the suburbs only if adequate, low-cost housing is available there. For many of the urban poor, the lack of low-cost suburban housing is a barrier. At recent congressional hearings, an official of the city of Hartford, Connecticut, testified:

We recognize and accept the fact that our [Hartford's] poorer residents cannot leave the city. The lack of low and moderate income housing in the suburbs is forcing suburbia's children out of their hometowns. There surely is no room there for the urban poor.

The picture in other metropolitan areas may not be as bleak as that painted for Hartford. In fact, the national statistics presented in the first section of this paper show that people of all income groups are leaving the cities. But the cold fact is that suburban jurisdictions have a vested economic interest in keeping low-income households out, since they contribute less to local tax coffers than they draw off in services. The

economic motivation behind exclusionary suburban practices is often accentuated by racial and social attitudes.

Higher jurisdictions occasionally have to take the lead in providing low-income housing opportunities in the suburbs. More and more, states and private parties have been using the courts to challenge, and sometimes overcome, restrictive suburban practices [5, 6, 20]. The federal government, in addition to legal action, has the weapon of grants, Community Development Block Grants in particular, that can be withheld from jurisdictions that do not pursue policies consistent with providing housing for all those who could be "expected to reside" there.

The availability of low-cost housing opportunities in the suburbs is necessary for the movement out from the city, but it is not sufficient alone. The housing-search process is another potentially fruitful area for public intervention. As shown in the previous section, most households limit their housing search in both duration and spatial extent. Low-income households, renters, and minorities, all of whom rely heavily on nonmarket information sources, have especially limited search horizons. Programs to heighten awareness of suburban opportunities among the cities' poor will promote their movement to the suburbs.

The major new federal housing-subsidy program of the 1970s—the Section 8 program—allows its low-income recipients considerable freedom in selecting where they will live. The subsidy is tied to the household rather than to the housing unit, as was the rule in previous programs. Combining housing-search assistance with the subsidy would promote deconcentration, which evidence shows is unlikely to occur otherwise [1].

Expansion of suburban low-income housing opportunities will not result in a movement outward by a representative sampling of the city's poor. Because of their higher mobility rates, the young and the renters among the city's poor will be the first to respond to new suburban opportunities and will therefore be overrepresented among those leaving the city. The elderly poor will lag behind.

Attracting the Middle Class to the City

What are the prospects for attracting the suburban middle class to the city? While the benefits of a move to the suburbs by the urban poor are seen as accruing mostly to the movers, the benefits of middle-class movement to the city most often cited—an enlarged tax base and a rehabilitated housing stock—accrue to the city. This asymmetry makes it difficult for cities to attract middle-class households. People move when and where it is in their self-interest to do so. If part of the middle-class flow into cities that is now occurring is attributable to temporary conditions of relative housing scarcity and high costs in suburban areas,

then the movement will stop as soon as market conditions change. If, on the other hand, moves to the city are a response to changing preferences for city living and are not sensitive to moderate changes in relative city/suburban housing-market conditions, the movement may be more lasting. At present, however, national opinion surveys fail to indicate that preferences are shifting toward city living.

Current suburbanites are one source of potential movers into the city, but cities should give special attention to attracting middle-class households moving into the metropolitan area for the first time. Historically, the city has been the destination of the poor who come to the area, from either the rural South or abroad. Now most migrants are arriving from other metropolitan areas, and they tend to have above-average incomes. Since these in-migrants generally have no prior attachments to suburban locations, they may be easier for the city to attract than current suburbanites.

Promotion of homeownership opportunities in the city would facilitate the attraction of the middle class. Suburbs have nearly two and one-half owner-occupied housing units for every renter-occupied unit. In cities, the ratio is only one to one, and in large cities, the ratio is even lower. Since homeownership is particularly attractive to higher-income households and is the motivation for a substantial fraction of all moves, cities need to consider strategies for inducing conversion of rental units, while minimizing the unfavorable impact of conversion on poor renters.

The middle class will have little reason to live in the city if their jobs are in the suburbs. Consequently, cities need to attract appropriate employers if they are to attract middle-class residents. Manufacturing and other relatively low-paying industries may provide job opportunities for the city's poor, but this type of employment holds little attraction for the middle class. Professional and scientific firms and corporate headquarters will draw more upper-income households to homes in the city. With the growth in the number of two-earner households, employment location can be expected to play an increasingly important role in residential locational choices.

In addition to housing and employment, urban amenities are important for attracting the middle class to cities. Houses and offices alone are probably not sufficient. Since middle- and upper-income households have the financial means to obtain a decent house in either the city or the suburbs, their locational choice may depend upon where they can find such "extras" as cultural, entertainment, and recreational facilities, architectural diversity, and parks. Several recent federal and local programs to support urban parks, arts and culture, and inner-city "shop-steadying," while only modestly funded, are small steps in the right direction.

Retaining the Cities' Middle Class

A conclusion to be drawn from mobility research is that *it is easier to keep people from moving out of an area than to attract people in from somewhere else*. For this reason, perhaps the most promising source of middle-class households for the nation's cities is the population already in the cities.

Historically, cities have been breeding grounds for the middle class, who often have fled the city as soon as their income growth enabled them to afford to move to the suburbs. In making this move, they overcame the tendency discussed earlier for movers to choose a place near their previous residence. To keep the homegrown middle class from moving out to the suburbs, cities only have to offer comparable opportunities. Cities do not have to offer *more* than the suburbs, as might be necessary to attract movers-in.

Assisting People and Assisting Places

Residential mobility patterns are both cause and effect of public policy toward urban areas. Some policies, notably FHA mortgage insurance practices and development of the interstate highway system, have *supported* development of suburbs that have been populated in part by people who have moved out from the cities. On the other hand, some policies have been adopted in *response* to patterns of movement—suburban growth controls are a prime example.

The effects of these programs illustrate an urban policy dilemma. Programs to assist people may adversely affect places, and vice versa. The FHA and the interstate highway system have benefited people by increasing the availability and accessibility of affordable housing, but at the same time, these programs have facilitated middle-class movement out of the city. Suburban growth controls may preserve the character of communities, but prospective in-movers bear the burden of restricted and costly access to the community.

Central-city revitalization is a major focus of current federal programs. To accomplish this goal at minimal human cost, suburban housing opportunities for the poor must be expanded *while* the cities are being made more attractive to the middle class. Success in opening the suburbs to the city's poor will only further the abandonment of the city if middle-class suburbanites are not attracted to take the place of the poor. On the other hand, if middle-class suburbanites are attracted to the city while the suburbs remain inaccessible to the poor, the city's fiscal position and housing stock may benefit, but the city's poor will suffer from escalating housing costs and displacement by higher-income in-movers.

Spatial targeting of assistance to low-income households in urban

areas can be used to promote changes in residential location. But some difficult decisions must be made. With regard to housing assistance, should housing programs be targeted on central cities, where the poor and minorities are disproportionately located, or should the programs concentrate on improving suburban housing opportunities for the urban poor? The same issue is raised by employment assistance programs. Providing employment opportunities in the urban core, a central element of the federal government's emerging urban policy, will reduce the incentive for the poor to find a residence in the suburbs. In the absence of budget constraints, one might increase opportunities for everyone everywhere. Budget realities, however, dictate that difficult balances be struck among conflicting policy goals. Tradeoffs between assisting people and assisting places are unavoidable.

Diversity in Urban America

This paper has dealt primarily with national aggregates and with the typical metropolitan area in which the central city is losing population and is less affluent than its suburban ring. But the diversity of metropolitan areas must be considered when policies and programs concerning residential mobility are formulated. The residential mobility patterns of declining areas are different from those of growing areas, of which there are still many. Although most cities are not as rich as their suburbs, some are, and they are found predominantly in growing metropolitan areas [18]. In these cities especially, it is less important to lure middle-class suburban households into the city than it is to induce middle-class households already in the city to remain there.

Newly developing urban programs of the seventies, such as block grants for community development and transportation and the Section 8 housing assistance program, acknowledge metropolitan diversity and can be custom-tailored to meet local needs. They are welcome innovations in the federal portfolio of programs, providing the flexibility required at the local level to deal with an important dimension of metropolitan area diversity—residential mobility.

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